



YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country (American Empire Project)

Andrew Bacevich

Last accessed on Saturday August 25,
2018**7 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)**

Yellow highlight | Page: 23

on the Russians," he told Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau in June 1942. That same year Admiral Ernest King, chief of naval operations, assured reporters in an off-the-record briefing that "Russia will do nine-tenths of the job of defeating Germany."¹⁴

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 23

Getting the Russians to shoulder the burden of defeating America's most dangerous adversary promised both to ensure support for the war effort on the home front and to position the United States to become victory's principal beneficiary. "The American people will not countenance a long war of attrition," the Pentagon's Joint War Plans Committee had warned in 1943.¹⁵ A long war of attrition fought by the Soviet Union was altogether another matter, however. For Washington, providing Stalin with whatever the Soviet Union needed to stay in the fight (while easing any doubts the Soviet dictator might entertain about America's commitment to the cause) constituted not only a strategic priority but also a domestic political imperative. To appreciate the implications of this arrangement—the Soviets doing most of the fighting while drawing freely on the endless bounty of American farms and factories—consider casualty statistics. At just above four hundred thousand, U.S. military deaths for the period 1941–45 were hardly trivial. Yet compared to the losses suffered by the other major belligerents, the United States emerged from the war largely unscathed. Estimates of Soviet battle losses, for example, range between eleven and thirteen million.¹⁶ Add civilian deaths—ten million or more in the Soviet Union, a mere handful in the United

States—and the disparity becomes that much greater. To ascribe this to the fortunes of war is to deny Roosevelt credit that is rightly his.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 24

The U.S. approach to waging war against the Japanese empire offered a variation on the same theme. With opportunities for outsourcing that war less available (and less desired), the United States shouldered the principal responsibility for defeating a Japan that was as resource poor as the United States was resource rich. When it came to industrial capacity, Japan was a comparative pygmy, its economy approximately one-tenth as large as the American leviathan. In 1941, Japan accounted for 3.5 percent of global manufacturing output, the United States 32.5 percent. At the outset of hostilities, Japan was producing 5.8 million tons of steel and 53.7 million tons of coal annually. For the United States, the comparable figures were 28.8 million and 354.5 million.¹⁷ As the war progressed, this gap only widened. The submarines that decimated Japan's merchant fleet and the bombers incinerating its cities brought the economy to its knees.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 26

Notably, all of this happened despite (or because of) increased taxation. Throughout the war, tax policy remained a contentious issue. Overall, however, Americans paid more, and more Americans paid. Between 1940 and 1942, the corporate tax rate went from 24 to 40 percent, with an additional proviso taxing "excess" profits at 95 percent. Tax rates on individual income became more progressive even as larger numbers of wage earners were included in the system. In 1940, approximately 7 percent of Americans paid federal income taxes; by 1944, that figure had mushroomed to 64 percent. No one proposed that wartime might offer a suitable occasion for cutting taxes.²³

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 171

Yet alongside perceived threat, perceived opportunity can provide sufficient motive for anticipatory action. In 1956 and again in 1967, Israel attacked Egypt not because its leader, the blustering Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, possessed the capability (even if he proclaimed

the intention) of destroying the hated Zionists, but because preventive war seemingly promised a big Israeli payoff. In the first instance, the Israelis came away empty-handed; their British and French allies caved in the face of pressure imposed by an angry President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Israel had no choice but to follow suit. In 1967, Israelis hit the jackpot operationally, albeit with problematic strategic consequences. Subjugating a substantial and fast-growing Palestinian population that Israel could neither assimilate nor eliminate imposed heavy burdens on the victors.

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 177

With this in mind, Obama demonstrated a keen preference for small-scale operations rather than big wars, quick strikes rather than protracted campaigns, actions conducted in secret rather than under the glare of publicity. The Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson got it right. "Obama wants to be known for winding down long wars," he observed. "But he has shown no hesitation when it comes to shorter, Israel-style operations. He is a special ops hawk, a drone militarist."¹⁶

Note:

Yellow highlight | Page: 177

With his affinity for missile-firing drones, the president established targeted assassination as the very centerpiece of U.S. national security policy. With his predilection for commandos, he expanded the size and mandate of U.S. Special Operations Command, which under Obama maintained an active presence in some 120 countries.¹⁷ That Obama should further the

Note:
